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HISTORY

OF

# The Akron Rubber Group

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# A HISTORY OF THE AKRON RUBBER GROUP

By R. H. Crossley and Ralph F. Wolf

In 1949, the Akron Rubber Group reached its majority, completing its twenty-first year of existence.

Although missing the distinction of being the oldest by about five weeks, the Akron Group is, nevertheless, the largest by virtue of its location in what is still the center of the rubber industry.

The idea of local rubber groups originated in 1927 at the Spring Meeting of the Division of Rubber Chemistry in Richmond, Virginia. At the Fall Meeting held in Detroit, September 8, 1927, it was proposed that local groups be formed in four cities and that membership be open to technologists in the rubber industry who were not chemists.

Harry L. Fisher, Division chairman, appointed four prominent members to begin the work of organizing local groups, viz., Ray P. Dinsmore, in Akron; C. R. Boggs, in Boston; A. A. Somerville, in New York; and R. B. Stringfield, in Los Angeles. The first meeting was held by the New York Group on January 11, 1928, and was followed by meetings in Los Angeles on January 20, Akron on February 15, and Boston on May 9.

In addition to Dinsmore, who served as



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chairman at the first meeting, other leaders in forming the Akron Group were Dr. H. A. Winkelmann, E. H. Nahm, J. M. Fry, G. K. Hinshaw, and H. R. Thies. The group elected Winkelmann chairman for 1928; W. H. Fleming, vice-chairman; and R. J. Bonstein, secretary-treasurer.

After the business of the first meeting, Dr. G. S. Lamb, professor of geology at Mt. Union College, discussed "Akron's Geological Formation and Its Relation to Water Supply." His talk was followed by several papers on water cooling problems in the rubber industry; H. K. Jennings discussed Firestone's problem in obtaining adequate water; A. P. Lewis, of Miller, described internal cooling problems pertaining to mills, calenders and tubers; and P. S. Shoaff reviewed Goodyear's methods of insuring delivery of cooling water to the necessary places.

Following this organization meeting, which was attended by two hundred and eighty-nine, an invitation to join the new Group was sent to all those in the area whom it was thought might be interested. This invitation outlined the purpose of the Akron Rubber Group, its requirements, and classification of membership. At the second meeting, held in April, 1928, the attendance was four hundred and seventy-five. This, incidentally, was the second highest attendance recorded at any fall, winter or spring meeting of the Akron

Group and has been surpassed by only three of the summer outings.

No complete record of the original membership exists but among the most active were such men as H. S. Alexander, H. L. Arbogast, P. C. Aultman, C. W. Bedford, J. C. Blue, R. J. Bonstein, L. W. Brock, G. W. Bulley, C. A. Carlton, A. W. Carpenter, C. W. Christensen, John A. Christie, Harry J. Conroy, L. V. Cooper, P. P. Crisp, E. G. Croakman, R. P. Dinsmore, J. H. Doering, K. J. Durant, H. E. Elden, J. H. Fielding, W. H. Fleming, A. H. Flower, J. M. Fry, George Gates, P. Goodwin, E. Gorsuch, R. M. Graham, Harold Gray, A. E. Hale, W. O. Hamister, G. K. Hinshaw, H. A. Hoffman, Robert Iredell, H. K. Jennings, R. R. Jones, Webster N. Jones, William E. Kavenaugh, Arthur Kelly, Frank Kovac, A. P. Lewis, J. P. Maider, J. F. McWhorter, Allan W. Merrill, E. H. Nahm, John E. Noonan, R. R. Olin, Henry F. Palmer, C. R. Park, L. C. Peterson, Howard P. Protheroe, Ralph M. Reel, J. A. Roberts, C. W. Sanderson, E. Shaw, Norman A. Shepard, P. S. Shoaff, F. F. Slack, Arthur W. Sloan, K. D. Smith, Verne L. Smithers, John N. Street, Herman R. Thies, K. J. Thompson, G. K. Trimble, Harlan L. Trumbull, Arthur E. Warner, William Welch, J. Willard, H. A. Winkelmann, O. C. Work, E. C. Zimmerman, and many others.

Unquestionably the most historic meeting of the Akron Group was held November

2, 1931, when the first public disclosure of DuPrene was made. The exact subject matter of the papers to be delivered had been kept secret prior to the meeting but rumors that they would deal with a new and highly important development in rubber chemistry brought a large attendance.

The meeting was held at the University Club and during dinner the guests were "entertained" by the Rubber Quartette, consisting of Messrs. DeFrance and Dinsmore, of Goodyear; Park, of Firestone; and Tillinghast, of New Jersey Zinc.

No Akron Rubber Group meeting has ever had two more distinquished guests than two who were present on this occasion. One was Father Julius A. Nieuwland, head of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Notre Dame, whose early work in acetylene chemistry pointed the way for the discovery by DuPont chemists of polymerized chloroprene. The other was Wallace H. Carothers, one of the most brilliant and at the same time most tragic figures in the history of American Chemistry.

Two papers were given. The first was presented by F. B. Downing for himself, Nieuwland, W. S. Calcott, and A. S. Carter. Collaborators in the second paper were Carothers, Ira Williams, Arnold Collins and J. E. Kirby. It was divided in two parts. The first was the theoretical part, delivered by Carothers, in which he described the vinyl acetylenes and 2-chlorobutadiene, and

gave the physical properties, and proof of structure. The second part was presented by Ira Williams and described the vulcanizable plastic polymer of 2-chlorobutadiene, which was called DuPrene, and also described formulations for vulcanization and the properties of the vulcanizates.

One member of the Akron Group who was present at this meeting states that the most significant impression he has retained was that a keen interest was displayed by the research people but little interest was shown by the commercial people. Although the latter were eager to see samples of the new material they foresaw little market for a synthetic rubber, the price of which was estimated at $1 a pound at a time when #1 ribbed smoked sheet was selling at four and one-half cents.

Akron has played host to the entire Division of Rubber Chemistry of the American Chemical Society on only two occasions and only one of these has occurred since the formation of the Akron Rubber Group. Prior to the formation of the local body, a divisional meeting was held in Akron in February, 1926. This was under the chairmanship of J. M. Bierer and was attended by two hundred and ninety-three chemists. In the fall of 1935, when the parent society held its semi-annual meeting in Cleveland, four hundred and fifty members of the Division of Rubber Chemistry met in Akron under the chairmanship of S. M. Cadwell.

Unfortunately, in Akron, which should and would like to hold the Division meeting frequently, hotel facilities are in inverse ratio to the proportion of the rubber industry centered in the city.

The Akron Group held the first of many highly successful summer outings at the Silver Lake Country Club on June 13, 1932. One hundred and eighty members and guests played golf and tennis and enjoyed a dinner and prize drawing in the evening. The outing has been held every year since with the exception of the war years of 1943, '44 and '45. Peak attendance of over 600 members at the 1948 outing at Lake Forest Country Club was approached by the attendance of an even 600 at the 1942 party and 530 at the 1947 outing.

The Akron Rubber Group attempted its first discussion panel type of meeting in February, 1948. The idea of an afternoon technical session followed by dinner and an evening entertainment proved so popular with the membership that the meeting drew the largest attendance in the history of the Group, except for three summer outings. Recorded attendance at the dinner was four hundred and sixty-seven. In addition a large number of people were present for the technical sessions only so that the total attendance was well over five hundred. Excellent technical papers were given by Carey Mann, of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, who talked on "Radio

Frequency Applications in the Rubber Industry" and by Donald F. Fraser, then manager of the rubber division of the Monroe Auto Equipment Company, who talked on "Injection Molding of Rubber Goods." Questions about radio frequency applications were answered by a panel consisting of G. P. Bosomworth, Firestone; H. J. Shively, Goodrich; and H. R. Neighbours, U. S. Rubber. The panel on injection molding included Herman Boxser, Acadia Synthetic Products Division of the Western Felt Works; Howard M. Dodge, General Tire and Rubber Company; John F. McWhorter, Ohio Rubber Company; and James L. Woodruff, of Gates Rubber. The idea was received with so much enthusiasm that a second panel type meeting was arranged for the February, 1949, meeting. This program was devoted to the subject of industrial fabrics.

The success of the Akron Rubber Group has been due to the unselfish efforts of a number of men who have worked diligently over the course of two decades with very little recognition of their labors from the membership as a whole. Only the officers are listed below. There have been many more, however, who have served on committees and whose only recognition will come inwardly from the satisfaction of knowing their own particular job has been well done.

Officers of the Akron Rubber Group since its formation:

| DATE | CHAIRMAN | VICE-CHAIRMAN | SECRETARY-TREASURER |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1928 | H. A. WINKELMANN | W. H. FLEMING | R. J. BONSTEIN |
| 1929 | G. K. HINSHAW | K. D. SMITH | C. W. SANDERSON |
| 1930 | C. W. SANDERSON | W. E. SHIVELY | L. W. BROCK |
| 1931 | P. P. CRISP | H. J. CONROY | L. W. BROCK |
| 1932 | H. J. CONROY | H. A. BOURNE | E. H. BAKER |
| 1933 | H. A. BOURNE | C. A. CARLTON | E. H. BAKER |
| 1934 | C. A. CARLTON | A. BRILL | H. A. HOFFMAN |
| 1935 | A. BRILL | E. H. BAKER | G. L. ALLISON |
| 1936 | E. H. BAKER | G. L. ALLISON | A. E. WARNER |
| 1937-38* | G. L. ALLISON | A. E. WARNER | H. V. POWERS |
| 1938-39 | A. E. WARNER | R. T. LAPORTE | H. V. POWERS |
| 1939-40 | R. T. LAPORTE | H. V. POWERS | T. L. STEVENS |
| 1940-41 | H. V. POWERS | L. V. COOPER | T. L. STEVENS |
| 1941-42 | L. V. COOPER | T. L. STEVENS | D. G. BENSON |
| | | | W. J. KRANTZ** |
| 1942-43 | T. L. STEVENS | A. E. SIDNELL | W. J. KRANTZ |
| 1943-44 | A. E. SIDNELL | W. J. KRANTZ | E. W. BALLARD |
| 1944-45 | W. J. KRANTZ | E. B. BUSENBERG | J. R. MOORE |
| 1945-46 | E. B. BUSENBERG | J. R. MOORE | R. M. VANCE |
| 1946-47 | J. R. MOORE | R. M. VANCE | H. F. PALMER |
| 1947-48 | R. M. VANCE | H. F. PALMER | C. A. RITCHIE |
| 1948-49 | H. F. PALMER | C. A. RITCHIE | E. L. STANGOR |
| 49-50 | C.A. Ritchie | E L Stangor | D.F. Behney |
| 50-51 | E.L Stangor | D. F. Behney | L. M. Baker |
| 51-52 | D.F. Behney | | |

*1937 officers held office through the 1938 summer outing. Thereafter, succeeding officers took office on September 1.

**Appointed after resignation of Benson who left the Akron area.

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